

Ofsted on RE Primary Subject Leadership in 2010

An extract from “Transforming Religious Education’ : A report on Religious education in schools 2006– 09

Leadership and management

Primary schools

92. The leadership and management of RE were good or outstanding in just over half the primary schools visited, the same proportion reported in 2007. Only one school was inadequate in this respect. The following features were evident where leadership and management were effective in primary schools.

- The subject leaders showed a high level of commitment.
- RE had a high profile in the school and the subject was integrated effectively into a programme to promote pupils’ personal development and well-being.
- Arrangements to support teachers’ planning and professional development were good.
- The arrangements for monitoring, self-evaluation, review and action-planning in the subject were effective. In the schools that had clear strategic action-planning for RE, this usually resulted in high quality teaching.
- Resources for RE were good, with effective use being made of information and communication technology to support learning and teaching.
- As part of the school’s commitment to community cohesion, RE was used effectively to promote links with local religious communities.
- Good use was made of the training and support provided by, for example, the local authority and the Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education.

93. Features of leadership and management of RE which were less effective in many of the primary schools visited included:

- very limited monitoring of the quality of the RE provision which led to weak self-evaluation of the subject
- narrowly focused development planning which concentrated on completing

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management tasks such as reviewing the subject policy rather than on improving the quality of provision and raising pupils' attainment

- very limited training for staff with little opportunity for the subject leader to support other teachers in planning RE.

94. A particular area of concern was the increasing use of teaching assistants to deliver RE instead of qualified teachers. Around a third of the primary schools visited deployed their teaching assistants in this way for at least part of the RE provision. In most cases, this was seen as a convenient way of releasing class teachers for a lesson a week so that they could complete planning, preparation and assessment. Too often, this had the effect of isolating RE from the rest of the curriculum, limiting the opportunities for sustained and integrated planning and detracting from the quality of the learning. However, where the teaching assistants were very carefully supported, managed and monitored, their enthusiasm and interest in the subject could have a very positive impact on pupils' learning. This was evident in the following example from a school where the leadership of RE was outstanding. The RE subject coordinator benefited from strong support from the senior leadership team and from the very active involvement of the link governor in developing and reviewing the subject. Good use had been made of training opportunities and support from the local authority. A clear set of priorities for improvement had been established, linked to robust action-planning and well-targeted monitoring. A strength of the process was the clear focus on raising standards and improving the quality of pupils' learning. The teaching assistants who took a lead in RE in three of the classes were enthusiastic about their work and collaborated closely with the class teachers in preparing lessons. The impact of their involvement was carefully evaluated and thought was given to ensuring that their use did not limit the scope for innovation in the way the subject was developed. Good progress had been made in developing assessment and in ensuring that pupils contributed to evaluating the effectiveness of the provision. A particular strength of the subject leadership was the careful monitoring of the curriculum. It had been recognised that, while the use of the local authority scheme of work had provided a good structure for developing the subject, introducing more innovative thinking about the curriculum was providing opportunities to improve RE further. In some classes, new models of integrated and enquiry-based RE had been introduced, moving beyond the local authority guidance. These had been carefully monitored to evaluate their impact on pupils' learning.